

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Academic Affiliations
Washington, DC**

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

**PREDOCTORAL NURSE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FOR
ACADEMIC YEAR (AY) 2004-2005**

1. **PURPOSE:** This fellowship program provides opportunities for registered nurses who are doctoral candidates to conduct their dissertation study at VA facilities if the topics of the dissertation are relevant to the care of veterans¹. Fellows may be full-time for two years or part-time for three years. (See section 2.b.)

This program announcement provides policies and procedures to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities for submitting applications to the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) for approval as a Predoctoral Nurse Fellowship Program site and approval of the applicant nurse as a predoctoral nurse fellow.

2. **POLICY**

a. This fellowship is for registered nurse doctoral candidates whose planned dissertation research has a clinical research focus that is relevant to the care of adult/aging veterans. Dissertation topics that are considered relevant to the care of veterans are in such areas as geriatrics, primary care, rehabilitation, spinal cord injury, home health care, women's health, mental health and substance abuse, and may focus on patient care outcomes related to health promotion, prevention of diseases, nursing care modalities, primary care, rehabilitation, home health care, health care systems administration, etc. (Also see footnote.)

b. Fellows may be either full-time (80 hours per 2-week pay period) for two years or part-time (minimum of 40 hours per pay period) for three years. Part-time fellows will receive a pro-rated stipend at the same hourly rate as full-time fellows.

c. The annual stipend for the Predoctoral Nurse Fellowship Program is \$25,000 (\$12.02 per hour). Part-time fellows will receive a pro-rated annual stipend based on \$12.02 per hour. OAA will provide approved VA facilities with funding for stipends and for VA's share (7.65%) of Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) and VA's share of health and life insurance premiums.

¹ *To demonstrate the relevancy of the study to the care of VA patients, the research project or study should involve the veteran population. However, there are situations when non-VA populations would be appropriate:*

1. *The study compares a VA-based population or intervention with a non-VA population. Studies that compare VA to non-VA care are acceptable.*

2. *The local sample is not large enough to provide adequate statistical power. Thus, for example, a sample from a VA nursing home may need to be supplemented with a community-based nursing home to provide adequate statistical power. An additional justification for a non-VA sample might be to have an adequate sample of women or minority patients.*

3. *The study intervention or measurement tool is not presently available at a VA site, yet is relevant to a veteran population. Generally, the goal in these studies is to show that the intervention or measurement tool is efficacious in a non-VA site before incurring the high cost of developing and implementing a pilot at a VA site.*

d. Up to two nurse fellows will be approved to begin the program in academic year 2004-2005. Continuation in the fellowship beyond the first year is subject to satisfactory performance evaluations.

e. Any expenses connected with the fellow's dissertation activities or research must be supported by funds from other sources rather than by the Predoctoral Nurse Fellowship Program. Transportation to the VA facility site and housing arrangements are the sole responsibility of the selected fellow.

f. Fellows who are recruited for this program will identify their VA fellowship in all reports, publications and presentations that occur during the fellowship and/or related to activities/research completed during the fellowship. Failure to do so may result in termination of the fellowship award or program by OAA. Fellows should provide OAA with an abstract for all publications and presentations based on the supported research.

3. VA FACILITY ELIGIBILITY

a. Resources and Environment: The facility must have clinical and patient care program activities that will support research activities of the predoctoral fellow.

b. Preceptor: A doctorally prepared preceptor must be available, either on the staff of the VA facility or on the faculty at the university, holding a paid or without compensation (WOC) appointment at the VA facility. The identified preceptor must have experience as a preceptor/mentor and research experience in nursing, biological, behavioral or other health related sciences, and must have knowledge of the research proposal approval process for both the university and the VA facility. The expertise of the preceptor must be congruent with the research interest of the fellow.

c. Program Director: A VA nurse who is employed full-time must be available to serve as the program director. The nurse program director will be responsible for administrative oversight of the program and will be the liaison person between the fellow and appropriate VA facility and affiliated university personnel. If qualified, the nurse program director can also be the preceptor for the fellow.

d. Affiliated College/University: The VA facility must have established affiliations with college and university graduate programs in nursing or other related disciplines. The academic program must be accredited by the nationally recognized accrediting body for the health care discipline. By the beginning of the fellowship program, the VA facility must have a signed affiliation agreement with the school in which the fellow is enrolled.

4. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

a. Be a citizen of the United States. No exception will be made.

b. Hold an active, current registration as a graduate professional nurse in a State, Territory or Commonwealth (i.e., Puerto Rico) of the United States or the District of Columbia.

c. Be able to meet the applicable credentialing and licensing requirements of VA. (Reference: VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging)

d. Be enrolled in a doctoral program within a school/college accredited by a national accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

e. Be classified as a doctoral candidate and have successfully completed all required courses and the comprehensive examination by the beginning of funding, which is usually October 1 but could be in August or September if requested and approved by OAA. If the applicant is not a doctoral candidate at the time of application,

- a letter from the academic program should be included with the application to explain what the applicant must do to obtain candidate status, when the coursework will be completed, and when the results of the comprehensive examination will be available. The letter should also state the expectation that these requirements will be met by the intended start date of the fellowship program.
- and if the applicant is selected for the fellowship program, the applicant will not be allowed to start the program until documentation is received by OAA that the requirements have been met.

f. Hold a master's degree in nursing or a master's degree in a field related to nursing and a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Nursing degrees must be awarded from programs accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

g. Proposed dissertation research must

- reflect a clinical practice orientation with expected results that are relevant to the nursing care of veteran patients in VA facilities (see footnote on page one)
- be approved by the applicant's graduate school dissertation committee as well as the host VA facility's Research and Development (R&D) Committee by the beginning of the fellowship.
 - If it is not possible to obtain approval by the dissertation committee and/or the VA R&D Committee prior to submission of the application, letters should be included from appropriate officials indicating that approval is anticipated prior to October 1, 2004, or date the fellowship is expected to begin.
 - If selected, the applicant may **not** begin the fellowship until OAA receives documentation from the academic program and/or the VA facility that these approvals have been accomplished.
- be able to be completed within the two-year time frame for a full-time fellow or within the three-year time frame for a part-time fellow.

5. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

a. The VA facility should submit an original and five copies to OAA so that they will be received no later than **June 4, 2004**. See section 9 of this announcement for the mailing information.

b. The application **must not exceed 37 single-spaced pages**, including the transmittal letter, core narrative, and appendices other than curricula vita of the applicant, program director, and preceptor. The font must be at least 10 point and all margins must be at least one inch. The application packet must contain the following:

- (1) Transmittal letter from the facility Director stating
 - (a) that the facility is prepared to support the fellowship program.
 - (b) that the research proposal has been approved by the VA facility's Research and Development Committee and appropriate subcommittees. If this approval is pending, state current status and anticipated date of approval notification. Documentation of approval should be submitted to OAA as soon as possible.
 - (c) the name, routing symbol, e-mail address, telephone number and fax number of the fellowship program director at the VA facility and the preceptor.
 - (d) whether the applicant is requesting a full-time or part-time fellowship. If requesting part-time, state the proposed number of hours per 2-week pay period.

- (2) Core narrative, which **must not exceed 25 pages**, is to: outline the proposed fellowship curriculum and dissertation research; provide background on applicant, preceptor, program director and VA staff involved with the fellowship; state how the research is relevant to the care of veterans and how the research results might be useful to VA; and demonstrate how VA facility resources will support the fellow.

The following areas must be addressed within this section:

(a) VA facility

- Description of facility support, i.e., patient care services and clinical programs that are ongoing at the facility, how interprofessional activities are integrated into these programs, other VA facility community involvement in education of nurses as well as predoctoral clinical and administrative activities.
- Description of clinical nursing research capacities, i.e., VA facility's accomplishments and other background characteristics that reflect qualifications for providing predoctoral training opportunities in clinical nursing research.
- Summary of the qualifications of fellowship program director and faculty/staff who will be involved with the fellowship, i.e., provide names and position titles of individuals from each of the services who will collaborate with the program director and/or preceptor in providing clinical and research opportunities for the predoctoral nurse fellow. Include curricula vitae of the program director in the appendix.
- If the preceptor is from the VA facility, provide the name, position, and brief background, including record of precepting/mentoring predoctoral students. This person must be doctorally prepared, qualified in the field of clinical research, and committed to assisting the applicant with the dissertation. A curriculum vita should be included in the appendix.
- A statement of plans to recruit and retain the predoctoral nurse fellow into the VA system.
- If the applicant is requesting training at another VA facility, then letters of support should be obtained from the initiating VA facility and the other VA facility.

(b) Applicant

- Name, description of background, including undergraduate and graduate education; and name of dissertation advisor. Curriculum vitae or résumé of the applicant should be included in the appendix and does not count toward page limits.
- Short and long-term career goals

(c) Fellowship Curriculum other than proposed research

- Description of proposed program goals and objectives, knowledge and skills to be learned or developed by the fellow, anticipated scientific presentations and publications. (See attachment A for sample format.)

(d) Proposed dissertation research (must not exceed 10 pages)

- **Title and Purpose(s) of the Study:** State the purpose(s) or specific aims of the study, including questions to be addressed and/or hypotheses to be tested.
- **Background/Preliminary Studies:** Discuss the relevant background studies and if available, any preliminary studies conducted by the applicant.
- **Significance:** Describe the significance of the proposed research to the care of veterans.
- **Study Design/Methods:** Discuss the study design, data collection methods, study population, study site(s), data analyses and presentation of results. Include in the discussion such items as the unit of analysis, comparison points, types of data to be collected, approach (randomization, observational, etc.), and end points to be evaluated. Discuss human subjects' considerations pertaining to need for informed consent and human subjects review committee approvals.

- (e) Academic Program
 - Describe the extent of the committed participation and support of the academic program in which the applicant is enrolled.
 - Letter of support from the dean/chairperson, making reference to joint activities between VA and university, if appropriate, and verification of applicant's status (include letter in the appendix.).
 - If the preceptor is from the academic program, provide the name, position, and brief background, including record of precepting/mentoring predoctoral students. This person must be doctorally prepared, qualified in the field of clinical research, and committed to assisting the applicant with the dissertation. A curriculum vita should be included in the appendix.
- (f) Fellowship Evaluation, if different or in addition to the criteria in section 9 of this program announcement.
- (g) Calendar plan of expected activities related to the research plan and other learning objectives/activities with approximate apportionment of time.

(3) Appendices must not exceed 10 pages, excluding the curriculum vitae.

- (a) Biographical sketch, résumé, or curriculum vitae of program director, preceptor and applicant (not included in page limit but should be somewhat abbreviated).
- (b) Letter from chairperson of the graduate department where the applicant is enrolled stating that:
 - the applicant is a doctoral candidate or is expected to be by October 1 or the beginning of the fellowship and what is yet to be achieved for this status;
 - the applicant is ready or expected to be ready by October 1 to pursue research for the completion of the dissertation; and,
 - the applicant's research design has been approved by a dissertation committee or is anticipated to be approved by October 1, 2004.
- (c) Letter from the VA facility Research Office stating that the dissertation research proposal has been approved by the local Research and Development Committee and any appropriate subcommittees. If this approval is pending, current status and anticipated date of approval notification should be stated. Documentation of approval should be submitted to OAA as soon as possible.
- (d) Letters of support and other relevant information. Specifically include letters of support from the proposed fellowship program director, the preceptor, other individuals who will be involved in the fellowship program, and the Nurse Executive at the VA facility.

6. REVIEW PROCESS:

An ad-hoc committee of scientists, nurse researchers and clinicians selected by OAA will review applications. The committee will evaluate specific items in the application that reflect:

- a. Facility and Affiliating School's Commitment, e.g., evidence of a commitment from the VA facility and affiliating institution to establish and support a Predoctoral Nurse Fellowship Program;
- b. Facility Support, i.e., patient care services and clinical programs that are ongoing at the facility, how interprofessional activities are integrated into these programs, and any other VA facility community involvement in education of nurses;
- c. Demonstrated Clinical Nursing Research Capacities, i.e., evidence of the VA facility's accomplishments and other background characteristics that reflect qualifications for providing predoctoral training opportunities in clinical nursing research;

d. Planned Fellowship Program, i. e., evidence of a clear understanding of the program's purpose, philosophy, goals and objectives, description of specific skills to be learned/developed by the fellow, conduct of fellow's dissertation research, etc.;

e. Planned Program Evaluation, i.e., evaluation of fellow's dissertation research activities; scientific presentations and publications; satisfaction of fellow, preceptor(s), and nurse program director; and impact of the program to VA nursing care systems;

f. Fellowship Program Faculty/Staff or Preceptors, i.e., qualifications of faculty/staff or preceptors that will be involved in the program. Provide names and position titles of individuals from each of the services that will collaborate with the preceptor in providing clinical and research opportunities for the predoctoral nurse fellow;

g. Recruitment and retention plan of the predoctoral nurse fellow into the VA system;

h. Fellow's qualifications and goals, e.g., evidence of satisfactory completion of didactic course work, official transcripts of all degree programs completed, curriculum vitae, copies or abstracts representative of published works, and a brief essay on career goals and potential contributions to VA.

i. Proposed dissertation, e.g., approval of dissertation proposal by appropriate committees and relevance to the care of patients in VA health care system.

7. APPOINTMENT AND PAY

a. Appointments will be made under 38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1)(D). Actual salaries for these predoctoral fellows will be the proportionate amount of the above cited per annum training rate. For PAID coding purposes, these employees will be identified by the use of occupation series and title code 0610-84-K4, pay plan code M, grade 00, step N.

b. Predoctoral Nurse Fellows are not eligible to be appointed under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA).

c. Predoctoral Nurse Fellows are eligible to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program and the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program. The Office of Academic Affiliations will provide funds to the facility for the VA's share of the premiums for these programs. Fellows must pay the employee's share of the premium.

d. Fellows may be detailed to other educational institutions without loss of pay but under no circumstances may the total time spent in non-VA institutions exceed one-sixth of the total hours a trainee is in a pay and training status with the VA (Reference: VA Handbook 5007, Part II, Chapter 2, section 2m(b)).

e. The fellows will earn annual and sick leave under the General Schedule leave system (5 U.S.C., chapter 63), compensation for job related illnesses or injuries under 5 U.S.C., chapter 81, and protection from personal liability while providing professional services at a VA health care facility (under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act, 28 U.S.C. 2679 (b)-(d)).

8. NURSE FELLOWSHIP GUIDELINES:

a. Within the first 4 weeks of the fellowship period, the calendar plan of the fellow's expected activities (in relation to their stated fellowship goals) that was submitted as part of the application should be refined. This plan should be a product resulting from consultations between the fellow and the preceptor, and should reflect the approximate apportionment of time among categories of the fellow's planned activities. Although the apportionment of time among activities will be based on the fellow's needs, the total program must be well balanced and should include interprofessional involvement related to clinical nursing programs at the VA facility.

b. Academic development activities might include collaboration in research projects, development of pilot studies, participation in structured education and training courses, tutorial arrangements, consultation with nursing care experts, independent study, and supervised clinical experiences. When considering these activities and planned schedules, fellows must take into account restrictions on time spent outside the VA facility. (Ref: Section 6.d.).

c. Within 12 months after the end of the fellowship period, each fellow will be required to submit a copy of the dissertation to the VA facility and to OAA. The fellow's dissertation, publications, and presentations emanating from the dissertation must state that the Department of Veterans Affairs supported the work.

9. PROGRAM EVALUATION:

a. The Predoctoral Nurse Fellowship Program must be evaluated at the end of each year and at the end of the program. The evaluation should include input from the fellow, the program director and VA facility staff, and the preceptor. Evaluation criteria for this program will include the following:

- (1) Review of the fellow's fellowship plan and attainment of the fellow's goals, objectives, and learning activities. Describe relevant activities that occurred that were not in the original fellowship plan as well as planned activities that could not be accomplished with reasons why not.
- (2) Plans for second year for all fellows and for the third year for part-time fellows.
- (3) Fellow's satisfaction with the program including suggestions for improvement both locally and nationally.
- (4) Descriptions of presentations, posters, publications, honors, etc. by or for the fellow during the fellowship program. Copies of abstracts or complete documents should be submitted whenever possible.
- (5) Employment of the fellow upon completion of the program. If not recruited to VA employment, why not and will the fellow have continuing involvement with VA activities?
- (6) Satisfaction of the following people with the fellowship program, his/her role, the fellow's progress and the program in general, and suggestions for program improvement both locally and nationally: Program Director, Preceptor(s), and other facility staff such as Chief of Staff, Associate Chief of Staff for Education and/or Research, Clinical Service Chief, Service Line Manager, etc.
- (7) The outcome of the fellow's dissertation research

b. Evaluation reports should be submitted to the Office of Academic Affiliations (143) within one month after completion of the each year and after completion of the program. The evaluation reports, along with transmittal memos from the VA facility director, should be sent to Linda D. Johnson, Ph.D., R.N., at the same address as the application was sent. (See section 10.)

10. MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:

a. Continuing bioterrorism precautions with U.S. Postal Service mail to VA Central Office will delay delivery and damage documents. Therefore, Federal Express should be used to ensure timely and acceptable delivery. **NO FAXES OF THE WHOLE DOCUMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

b. Mail the original and five copies of the application, including transmittal letter, to:

Office of Academic Affiliations (143)
ATTN: Linda McInturff
VA Central Office, Room 475
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

11. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

For additional information contact Linda D. Johnson, Ph.D., R.N., Director, Associated Health Education, Office of Academic Affiliations (143), VA Central Office, Washington, D.C., at (202) 273-8372, or e-mail at Linda.Johnson@hq.med.va.gov.

12. PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

Program Announcement distributed to facilities and schools of nursing	February 5, 2004
Applications due in the Office of Academic Affiliations, VA Central Office, Washington, DC	June 4, 2004
VA facilities notified of approval/non-approval of application	August 6, 2004
Fellowship begins (unless August/September funding is requested and approved by the Office of Academic Affiliations)	October 1, 2004
Evaluation reports due to Office of Academic Affiliations	October 30 each year starting 2005 (or one month after completion of each year of fellowship)

ATTACHMENT A

FORMAT: PREDOCTORAL NURSE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CURRICULUM PLAN

(Please Note: In addition to conducting activities related to the fellow's dissertation, academic development activities might include collaboration in research projects, participation in structured education and training courses, tutorial arrangements, consultation with nursing care experts, or supervised clinical experiences.)

Long Term Goal #1:

Long Term Goal #2:

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CURRICULUM			
Long Term Goal #1:			
Short Term Goal (1):			
Learning Objectives	Learning Experiences	Evaluation	Training Staff
Develop Demonstrate		Demonstrates through discussion or publication knowledge of	Dr. Dr. I
Short Term Goal (2): Increase knowledge of			
Learning Objectives	Learning Experiences	Evaluation	Training Staff
		.	Dr. Al Bertstein